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Forward

**SOLID WASTE
MANAGEMENT BUREAU**
Division of Environmental Sciences
Montana State Department of Health
and Environmental Sciences

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It's Your Move!

During the next few months the State's Solid Waste Management Plan required by recently enacted legislation will be developed. Outlining the steps is like setting up a game with rules for play, tips on winning and the responsibilities of the players.

When the game is completed, everyone will win. Proper, thoughtful and innovative solid waste management systems in effect in every city and county will protect the environment, public health and budgets of local government throughout the state. The only opponents are ignorance, apathy and lack of understanding.

Every move requires the intensive concern of local government officials. As Terry Carmody, chief of the Solid Waste Management Bureau suggests: "We can only act as coaches and, to some extent, referees. A successful conclusion rests entirely with people at the local level."

The intent of the State Plan is to assist local governments in developing local solid waste management systems which may include areawide landfills, resource recovery facilities or other waste management programs. The goal of the plan is the proper disposal of all waste generated in the state.

The State Plan will not dictate to local government the precise or specific operations it should implement. It will simply provide the means for the localities to determine and execute a system which best fits their needs and situations. The major stipulation for any local plan or system is that the waste generated must be disposed in an environmentally sound manner. Federal law, however, requires the closure of all open dumps by July 1, 1983 — in five years.

HOW TO PLAY

Development and implementation of the State Plan will basically be in four moves.

Move I — (June) Preliminary Assessment of the Local Situation and Review of Solid Waste Management Strategy.

Local government officials and other interested persons are urged to assess their local waste management operations and consider their problems. They should also investigate possible

areas of mutual concern with neighboring governments. Finally, a review of the information provided to the state by its consultants during the past year would be very beneficial to an understanding of the possible solutions to local problems and alternative waste management systems.

Move II — (June - October) Development of State Plan.

The Solid Waste Management Bureau plans to release its Draft of the State Plan and proposed rules by the end of June. This draft and proposed rules will serve as a basis for development of a final plan and a starting point for discussions and public hearings with local officials and the public during five regional meetings. Of particular interest to local governments will be the proposed criteria and procedures for developing and implementing local waste management systems.

Move III — (October) Local Planning.

After the final plan is adopted incorporating suggestions from local governments and interested citizens, local planning will begin with in-depth assessment of local problems and alternative solutions. During this phase, the state will provide technical assistance and funding. The result will be a local plan approved by the cooperating local governments.

Move IV — Implementation of the Plan by Local Governments.

Again, during this phase state technical assistance and funding will be available.

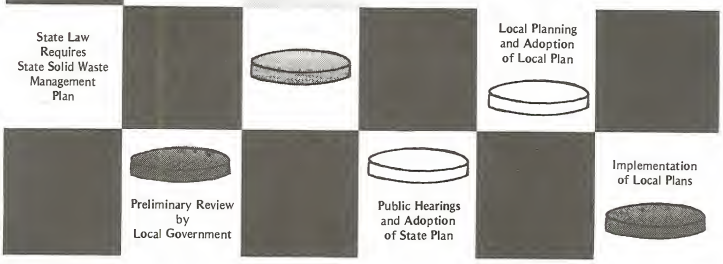
TIPS ON HOW TO WIN

1. Be an informed player. Go and look at your local landfill. Is it causing environmental problems by burning or because of its location? Review your local budget and solid waste management costs. Find out approximately how much waste is generated in your area, how much your landfill site can accommodate, and your area's expected population growth. Review and consider the quality of service in your area. Talk with your neighboring local governments to get a preliminary idea of possible cooperation.

2. Study the Draft State Plan and Proposed Rules. Consider whether the proposed procedures for local planning are clear, workable and designed to produce the best local plan possible. Can you work to follow them in your community? Is the criteria included in the rules for judging planning proposals and solid waste management systems adequate and acceptable?

3. Attend meetings and hearings. If you follow the first two suggestions, your concern, ideas and suggestions will contribute to developing a state plan which will suit everyone's needs and which will be a valuable asset to the state.

With carefully coordinated moves and the complete cooperation of all players throughout the state, Montana can win the solid waste management game.



TERRY'S MAIL BOX

IT'S YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

Dear Terry,

I read in the paper that the legislature shorted counties by millions of dollars. The article said that two of the bills involved solid waste: SB 175 requiring compliance with state solid waste disposal plans and HB 437 requiring the shielding of motor vehicle graveyards. Would you justify these additional burdens on county budgets.

Signed: Keeping Track

Dear Keeping Track,

There seems to be a misunderstanding about these pieces of legislation. They will NOT cost counties money. In fact, both offer financial assistance to counties from the state.

SB 175 is the law which requires development of a State Solid Waste Management Plan. As I've pointed out many times, the Plan will basically be the collection of the many local plans designed and completed by local governments. The law establishes a method of financially assisting local governments to do this planning and further provides for a loan program for implementation of their plans.

HB 437 (which simply provides for some minor changes in a law which has been in effect since 1973) provides that money collected by the state from vehicle registration is returned to the counties for local junk vehicle disposal programs which includes screening county junk car graveyards. No county is spending local government tax monies on this program!

Such misunderstandings are unfortunate and I thank you for checking with me on the accuracy of those comments.

Dear Terry,

A friend told me he heard that Montana's large number of open, burning dumps are causing lots of problems for farmers and ranchers. Is this true?

Signed: Gossip's Friend

Dear Friend,

Yes. As you will note in the article "It's Your Responsibility" there have been several instances of fires from burning dumps spreading into crops or pastureland. Cattle have died from eating blowing garbage, particularly plastic. Bird and animal scavengers have carried diseases into crops. The potential for water pollution from leaching of contaminated materials in an improperly located dump is great and such pollution could affect people as well as animals and crop land. The dangers to livestock and agricultural land from improper and illegal landfill operations and locations should never be underestimated. They are real and have happened.

Dear Terry,

Wood wastes are becoming a problem at our local landfill. Can you suggest some solutions?

Signed: Watchful

Dear Watchful,

One obvious solution is to establish a program whereby persons disposing of wood wastes can deposit them in a specific location where others with fireplaces and wood burning stoves can collect them. Such a program can be considered when your area studies its waste management problems and develops its Local Plan. We also have several bulletins and publications with technical solutions which we would be happy to provide to your local government.

Sincerely,

Terry Carmody, Chief
Solid Waste Management Bureau

The summer of 1971 was hot and dry. The small town of Oswego, Montana still had an open dump just east of town which was burning refuse on September 11th of that year. On that day, the town burned down. Fifteen buildings and 18,000 acres were burned in a path two miles wide and ten miles long. Twelve families were displaced. The exact cause of the fire was never determined, however, one news report and many people attribute its beginnings to the dump.

The responsibility for local solid waste management systems resides with local governments. There are still some local officials who do not appreciate the extent of this responsibility and its potential problems. The following examples occurred in other Montana towns. Their identity is not included because some incidents are still in litigation.

* Autumn, 1974. Local landfill located on edge of wheat field is an open, burning dump which caused 20 acres of wheat to burn. Local government settled out of court with landowner.

* Late summer, 1975. Local burning dump causes grass fire which burns 40 acres of fall pasture. City settles out of court for more than \$8,000 with farmer who is compensated by estimating amount of lost feed for cattle and cost of substitute food.

* Spring, 1977. Fire from burning dump burns between 500 - 600 acres of grass land. Also, at this time, 17 head of cattle were found dead at the dump site, apparently poisoned while grazing at or near the site.

* Spring, 1977. Open, burning dump with blowing paper and plastic adjacent to pasture land where two spring calves died from strangulation after eating plastic wrappers.

* Summer, 1976. Open dump is suspected of causing loss to a portion of a vegetable crop adjacent to site. It is felt that scavenger birds and animals eating in the dump carried a deadly plant virus from there into the field.

* Rats. It is well documented that in the last 20 - 25 years there has been a substantial migration of rats into Montana. Open dumps become one of their principal habitats and, since dumps are often located near agricultural land, they can inflict serious damage on adjacent crops in addition to being an obvious danger to public health.

* Water pollution. Specific instances of dumps polluting adjacent streams and ground water sources can be difficult to document. In the case of rivers, resultant pollution or leaching dissipates rapidly in fast flowing current and during years of normal rainfall, the threat to local wells may be minimal. However, the impending summer of drought will drop the water level of streams and violation of clean water laws may be easily detected. Another potential danger is a shift in ground water flow which may allow water contaminated by leaching refuse to enter an aquifer serving private wells.

Local governments are urged to evaluate the potential dangers of their landfill operations including possible fire hazards, water pollution and rat infestation. The Solid Waste Management Bureau offers all localities technical assistance in assessing such problems and recommending solutions.



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